



May 6, 2011

Dear Colleague,

As the new Director of the Office on Women's Health (OWH), it is my pleasure to join this dedicated team in its 20th year of service and announce our 12th annual [National Women's Health Week](#) (NWHW). From May 8, 2011, (Mother's Day) through May 14, 2011, we aim to raise public awareness about the importance of women's health and encourage women and girls to make their health a top priority. Women are the foundation of many families, but too often we place the needs of others before our own. NWHW serves as a reminder to take the time to be physically active, eat well, visit a health care professional, avoid risky behaviors and pay attention to our mental health. This not only benefits us, but strengthens our families and communities.

During this year's National Women's Health Week, we will celebrate our 9th annual [National Women's Checkup Day](#) on May 9th. On this day, we encourage women to visit their health care professional for check-ups and screenings or to make an appointment for these important steps to prevent diseases. Regular checkups are vital to the early detection of diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer as well as infections and other illnesses. Across the country, hundreds of healthcare providers offer preventive screenings at no cost or at a reduced cost.

This year we are also celebrating the 20th anniversary of the OWH and the progress made in women's health during these two decades. Today, women are living longer; moreover, we have a better understanding of the many factors affecting our health at each stage of our lives. Of course, with this progress, there is still much to learn and much to do for women's and girls' health. For example, women are more likely to face certain health problems, such as arthritis, depression, asthma and obesity when compared with men.

Please observe NWHW with us and together, we can play a role in strengthening the women and girls in our lives. There are several ways you can participate, including:

- Encourage the women in your community to visit their doctor and make prevention a key component of their well-being.
- Instead of a box of chocolates for Mother's Day, give yourself and/or the important women in your life a pair of walking shoes -- a gift of health.
- Take the children for the afternoon so their mother has time to focus on herself.
- Visit our website to find a [NWHW activity or event](#), such as a dance contest, free health screening or 5K run, being held in your area and attend. If you're considering holding your own event, please [register](#) it.
- Commit to regular exercise and start with the [2011 Woman Challenge](#), a nationwide effort encouraging regular physical activity.

Additionally, if you are a NWHW partner or collaborator, remember that the OWH provides resources, such as our *Promoting Your NWHW Event: A How To Guide for Media Outreach* and our *Checklist for Your NWHW Event*, to complement and support your local activities. These resources can be found in the [activity planning resources](#) section of our website.

Lastly, since the Affordable Care Act was passed into law on March 23, 2010, women and families have even more to celebrate. Its provisions make it easier than ever for women to take charge of their health and their family's health with high-quality, affordable health care. For example, it requires health insurance plans created after the law's enactment to cover recommended preventive services, including Pap smears, mammograms, colonoscopies and well-baby and well-child visits, at no charge. Beginning in 2014, it will be illegal for health insurers to charge women higher premiums than they charge men, and it will be illegal to deny any woman coverage based on a pre-existing condition. Please visit www.healthcare.gov/foryou/women for more information about how women will benefit from the Affordable Care Act.

I look forward to hearing from you about your successes with NWHW and your other women's and girls' health initiatives throughout the year. Many thanks for your hard work and persistent efforts toward improving the health of our nation's women and girls.

Sincerely,

/Nancy C. Lee/

Nancy C. Lee, MD
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